

Brownell Library Trustees  
Meeting Minutes  
February 17, 2026

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Dottie Bergendahl, Alex Carmical, Helen Donahey, Jessica Dow, Jeanne Grant, Karen Hergesheimer, Venessa Luck, Christine Packard, Sheila Porter.

Brownell Staff in Attendance: Wendy Hysko, Hannah Tracy

Other Attendees: none

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Karen Hergesheimer.

1. Agenda Changes/Deletions - add group norms
2. Public to be Heard - none
3. Announcements - none

4. Minutes of Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – Corrections noted: in the Foundation Report: next book donation is February's third Saturday (Feb. 23). Venessa Luck's name was misspelled in multiple places, and there were a couple of other typos noted.

Action: Sheila moved acceptance of the minutes as corrected; Venessa seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

5. Financial Report – Dottie reviewed the report and noted a few items running higher than expected. Contracted services is close to budget for the year. Repair & Maintenance is overbudget due to some unavoidable and unexpected expenses. Some planned repairs have been deferred for that reason. Building supplies are running high: Wendy noted that this is mostly TP and soap; staff are questioning the TP usage levels.

The Trustee checking account balance is at \$2,070. There is \$2,956.39 in the Trustee CD. Instead of simply rolling it over, we might be able to get a higher interest rate. It was unclear when the current CD term expires. Wendy emailed the Foundation and ascertained that the expiration date is February 25 and there were options for a 5 or 11 month CD rate of 3.3%.

Action: Dottie moved that we request that the Foundation seek a higher rate; Sheila seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. It was requested that the Foundation move the CD funds to a 5 month CD at a 3.3% rate.

Action: A motion to acknowledge the Foundation report was passed unanimously.

#### 6. Reports - Library Director and Staff Report

There was discussion about ideas staff are considering for the lower level. Needs include better lighting, more outlets, new carpet, more study carrels. Sustainable Library process – it's exciting that we are already at 45% completion towards the Sustainable Library certification. There was discussion regarding accessing the Sustainable Libraries portal – Karen will send out the credentials again to ensure all trustees can access this information.

There was discussion regarding the statistics provided in the monthly report. We are working to reduce unnecessary work, but the report format is a bit difficult to read and without context it's hard to know if the data provided is average, below, or above typical. Karen suggested adding a very brief summary (2 lines) for context. For example: adult program participants are up because we added 3 new programs; this month circulation finally caught up to pre-Covid levels; bad weather impacted two evening programs.

7. Committee Reports – we have no committees!

8. Work groups

- 100th Planning – Update: Friday, July 17 is the new date for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, so that it can happen during library open hours and we'll have space under cover if weather is uncooperative. Staff are thinking of a simple BBQ, with an old-fashioned Americana feel (to coincide with the nation's 250<sup>th</sup>). Trustees will provide financial support and should plan to be present at the event to assist, but are no longer responsible for planning the entire event.
- 100th party – An updated events schedule will be shared once it is finalized.
- Sustainability - no discussion (except as part of Director's report)
- Budget work group – no discussion

9. Staff/Trustee bimonthly education - Hannah - information technology management

Hannah reviewed the array of technology Brownell has available to its patrons.

Wendy noted that we are ahead of many peer libraries in that we have chosen to have in-house staff who are trained and knowledgeable in tech support, and have invested in upgrading technology on a regular schedule. It was noted that having dedicated on-site tech staff makes response time far more nimble and effective for patrons (and staff) than libraries who must submit a ticket for issues and wait for external support.

10. Old Business – Group Norms – There was discussion of the Group Norms presentation. Some trustees felt uncomfortable and/or criticized by the suggestions. Others did not feel any criticism. All agreed that the presentation was never intended to be critical. Venessa noted that she finds it helpful to have specific tasks, so she felt that creating a list of different ways to support the Brownell as trustees would be offering many choices. Venessa noted that having been a trustee for a year she has found it a bit confusing to try to determine what is the role, and that communication isn't always clear.

Karen noted that we do need some basic ground rules to function effectively, and we need to ALL agree to those. Identifying group norms is not as clear cut; we're developing as a new group. The knowledge gap between those who have been on the board for decades and those coming in new can be a challenge. A mentor/mentee program could improve that experience. The Board also has experienced a period of adjustment with all the changes that the city has gone through. Onboarding of new trustees seems to be an area where there is room for improvement. Karen commended Venessa for bringing up the topic and putting herself out there, and commended also those trustees who spoke candidly about their response.

Karen suggested that we think about what ground rules we can perhaps all agree on and put that on the March agenda, and noted that a mentor program will be discussed later in tonight's agenda..

## 11. New Business

Nonprofit policy – Wendy presented a draft nonprofit policy for the Board to review for any non-profits who are formed to support the Brownell Library. It was noted that the Foundation will need to have an updated MOU to align with this new policy. There was discussion of several aspects of the draft policy.

Dottie, with her involvement in the Foundation, and Karen, with her involvement in the Friends, both decided to abstain from voting due to conflicts of interest.

Action: Sheila moved acceptance of the policy and Christine seconded. The motion passed with two (Dottie, Karen) abstaining. Dottie requested that the policy be forwarded to the Foundation.

Permanent Board work group – Karen suggested that the Permanent trustees create a work group to develop a mentorship program. She felt that this group might be the best for this task to ensure that the institutional knowledge (that typically resides largely in the Permanent Board) be shared more effectively. It was clarified that the Permanent Board work group would not have to BE the mentors, just to develop a plan. There was resistance to the idea of assigning the mentorship program to the permanent trustee members, because it creates a distinction among trustees that was not seen as being pertinent or helpful.

Action: It was determined that a Mentorship working group will be on next month's agenda. The group will be open to any trustee who would like to participate.

Trustee gift/recognition policy – This was developed to mirror the Brownell policy that was created last month. There was one minor adjustment made to the policy wording: the amount can be for a gift card OR a gift value.

Action: Sheila moved the amended policy; Dottie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Meeting - change to 6:30pm – Helen noted that her original request was not to meet earlier, but to streamline the meetings with a consent agenda and reserve discussion for the most pressing matters. Karen felt that although some streamlining may be possible, because we meet only once a month we do need to allow time for discussion, and starting earlier might be helpful. There was discussion. A few members said the 6:30 pm start time might be challenging. Karen suggested we try the earlier time for a couple of months and see how it goes.

Action: Dottie moved that we change the meeting time to 6:30 pm for the March and April meetings, as a trial, and Sheila seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee photo update – Wendy has arranged for a photographer to take a new trustee photo at a future meeting, date TBA. Trustees will be notified in advance of the date.

13. Adjournment – Sheila moved adjournment at 9:10 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Helen Donahey

Note on Vermont Open Meeting Law - minutes must be taken at every public meeting and must include at least the members present, active participants, motions made, and votes taken. And posted on website and be available by request within 5 days of meeting.

\*\*\*Minutes should be provided to the Library Director and Assistant Library Director for posting by Friday afternoon of the meeting week to adhere to Vermont Open Meeting law. \*\*\*